

Djibouti national day

Djibouti strengthens position as a gateway to Africa

Ahmed Arita Ali
AMBASSADOR OF DJIBOUTI

Today, the Republic of Djibouti celebrates the 35th anniversary of its independence, while Japan is rising strong from the ashes of last year's triple calamities and the tragedy of lost innocent lives and the sufferings of hundreds of thousands of survivors.



I would like to take advantage of this glorious occasion to present on behalf of H.E. the President of the Republic of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh and the government and people of Djibouti our sincerest wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, and to the government and great people of Japan for continued peace, progress and prosperity.

Our visit to deliver an optimal contribution to Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, and message of sympathy sent to the region affected by natural disasters by the president of Djibouti and people of Djibouti can be a testimony to the great solidarity between the two countries

Bilateral relations

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Djibouti and Japan. This important relationship between the two countries has been nurtured over this time and has been of mutual benefit to both nations. The past several years, Japan has been supporting Djibouti's development policy, especially focusing on the areas of water, agriculture, health, energy, capacity building and visit of state officials, etc.

In terms of cooperation, the Japanese government has taken a signal step in appointing a permanent ambassador based in Djibouti as a testimony to commitment to the relationship

between our two people.

Economic opportunities

Djibouti provides a unique opportunity for investors from Japan looking to set up in East Africa. Its strategic location means that companies based in Djibouti are well-placed to access the markets of COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa).

As we know, Japan is rich in technology, Africa is rich in resources. If this relationship is managed well, it could create a win-win situation.

Djibouti is one of the best places from which to access this rapidly growing market for a number of reasons. First, it is acknowledged as the freest market and a liberal business environment. For overseas investors' benefit, there are no restrictions on repatriation of capital, profits or dividends. Djibouti has a tried-and-tested legal and regulatory environment, which investors can trust to protect their interests in a fair, open and transparent manner.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite Japanese investors to take advantage of the abundant investment opportunities available in Djibouti, particularly in the key sectors of mining, tourism, agriculture, hard infrastructure, and energy, etc.

To enhance our strategic position, Djibouti has signed an agreement with Ethiopia and South Sudan for a landmark tripartite deal to build telecommunications and rail networks, oil pipelines and duty-free zones to link their economies via multimillion-dollar infrastructure projects. Djibouti has started the construction of a new port at Tadjourah to handle the growing demands of the landlocked countries in the Horn of Africa. It will mainly focus on general cargo, such as livestock, fertilizers and grain. The port is part of a wider project to improve infrastructure in the region. It is designed to include a highway and a railway line.

The aim is the eventual estab-

lishment of a trade area that will bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increase investment flows, enhance competitiveness and develop cross-regional infrastructure.

The TICAD process

I seize this opportunity to reiterate my country's appreciation to the government of Japan for having successfully organized the TICAD IV fourth follow-up Ministerial Meeting in Marrakech in May 2012.

As a beneficiary of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process, we are witnessing the impact of Japanese support in our priority areas mentioned above to alleviate poverty and

enhance productivity through the TICAD process.

We expect TICAD V, to be held next year, to continue to support high-impact projects such as the geothermal, infrastructures, industrializations and transfer of technology to promote national competitiveness in a global economy.

SDF base in Djibouti

A good illustration of the solid bilateral relations linking Japan to Djibouti was the establishment in Djibouti last year of Japan's first overseas military base since World War II. Obviously, the presence of the Self-Defense Forces in East Africa is one of the cornerstones to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia.

Even if the military deterrence

has managed to reduce the ratio of successful attacks off the coast of Somalia, piracy is a serious challenge that we'll have to do more about, but the long-term and sustainable solution is to resolve the political crisis within Somalia and make the country a normal, functioning state. That's the key.

Effectively, the stability solution to piracy in Somalia is on-shore peace. These are our policies and the policy championed by President Guelleh is a pro-peace policy.

Tourism in Djibouti

I might take this opportunity to say that this year we intend to organize in Tokyo a seminar on sustainable tourism with the participation of partners, neigh-

boring countries and other key stakeholders in order to showcase our tourism diversity to the Japanese people.

We have exceptional tourist potential in our unique geological sites, which have always attracted scientists and adventurers in search of extreme sensations and change, going through the lunar and volcanic landscapes in Lake Abbe.

Lake Assal is a popular lake in Djibouti. The word "assal" means "salty." There is 34.8 percent more salt in the beautiful lake than in the Dead Sea. It is the world's third largest saltwater lake and the continent's lowest point, 150 meters below sea level.

On behalf of all Djiboutians, I would like to invite you to visit



Deepening ties: Newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Atushi Nishioka presents the letter of credential to Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh in Djibouti on March 12.

EMBASSY OF DJIBOUTI

Djibouti, saying "Arhibba Soddawada," which means "You are welcome as a family member."

My sincere appreciation to

The Japan Times for granting me this unique opportunity to address its distinguished readers. Thank you.



Solidarity: Djiboutian Ambassador Ahmed Arita Ali meets with Katsunori Sakurai, mayor of Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, on April 26. EMBASSY OF DJIBOUTI

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Djibouti
on the 35th Anniversary of Their Independence



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